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ABSTRACT

Graduates of professional preparation programs in special education are followed up in order to know about the status of professionals who completed their training in programs receiving federal support from the Office of Special Education Programs Division of Personnel Preparation. This bulletin discusses graduate follow-up precondition criteria developed by the National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and by learned societies that hold institutional membership in NCATE. NCATE has developed broad criteria in the areas of relationships with graduates and relationships with schools. Criteria developed by the Council for Exceptional Children, which is the learned society for special education, focus on continuing interaction with consumers and student involvement in curriculum decision making. An association is made between the NCATE requirements and the learned society's guidelines, to assist those engaged in the accreditation review process. Methods typically used to collect follow-up data include interviews with graduates, supervisors of those graduates, school and human services administrators who employ those graduates, and other relevant community professionals. Questions posed usually focus on: adequacy of program of study; professional development; continuing institutional support; reactions to graduates; and continuing relationship to institution, school, and community. The paper concludes that the information base on the follow-up of graduates of professional education programs is scant, but some promising suggestions of ways in which colleges and universities might follow up on their recent graduates can be found in recent literature. (Contains 17 references.) (JDD)



• National Association of State
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GRADUATE FOLLOW-UP:

An Examination of NCATE's Precondition Criteria,
CEC's Criteria, and the State of the
Knowledge Base

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Central to the interest in the follow-up of graduates in college and university professional preparation programs is the leadership exerted by the National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Importantly, in special education, the federal government has for a long time assumed a national leadership position.

In this regard, staff of the Division of Personnel Preparation, Office of Special Education Programs have required college and university faculty receiving fiscal support for professional training programs to include plans for collecting data on graduate follow-up in their application proposals and analyses of that data in their annual reports. While this effort is positive and useful, the professional literature is quite sparse in its reporting on the follow-up of the graduates from basic and advanced programs, including those programs in special education.

This Information Bulletin briefly discusses "learned society criteria" - the precondition criteria developed by societies that hold institutional membership in NCATE which must be addressed by colleges and universities during the initial phases of their participation in the NCATE review process. Also presented is a listing of the topical areas which graduate follow-up questions usually focus on, as well as a discussion of the state of the knowledge base in graduate follow-up.

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GRADUATE FOLLOW-UP:

An Examination of NCATE's Precondition Criteria, CEC's Criteria, and the State of the Knowledge Base

Introduction

As a result of efforts by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in the late 1970s and in the 1980s, colleges and universities in the United States began to focus their attention on the post-university experiences of graduates from their professional education programs. Another interest in the topic evolved from the work of the coordinators of the comprehensive systems of personnel development located in the special education structure in each state department of education.

Administrators and faculty at each of the institutions of higher education who apply for NCATE approval must respond to specific criteria about the follow-up of graduates from those institutions' basic and advanced programs in education. The criteria evolved from officials at NCATE developing cooperative agreements with national learned societies representing the various disciplines in education throughout the country. In turn, these criteria must be addressed in NCATE-required program folios (e.g., descriptions of each individual degree program by discipline, content, or subject area) and the report on preconditions (e.g., the response to across-the-board criteria applicable to an institution's entire group of programs in professional education) if that college or university is to receive NCATE accreditation.

Preconditioned Criteria

The graduate follow-up precondition criteria (NCATE, 1987) include:

a) **Standard II.B: Relationships with Graduates**

The unit (e.g., governance structure of a college or university programs in professional education) maintains relationships with graduates from its professional education programs that include follow-up studies and assistance to beginning professionals.

Criteria for Compliance:

- (33) The unit keeps abreast of emerging evaluation techniques and engages in regular and systematic evaluations, including follow-up studies, to determine the success and quality of graduates in the professional education roles for which they were prepared.
- (34) The results of evaluation efforts, including follow-up studies of graduates, are used by the unit to modify and improve programs.

- (35) The unit has developed arrangements with school districts in the area to provide assistance to its graduates who are first year teachers and/or who are beginning other professional education roles as an extension of their professional education program.

b) Standard II.C: Relationships with Schools

The professional education unit maintains positive working relationships with schools to advance the goals of the profession and to promote the effective preparation of professional educators.

Criteria for Compliance:

- (36) Positive working relationships with local schools are developed and maintained to improve the delivery of quality education in K-12 schools.
- (37) The unit and local schools cooperatively develop research questions and inquiry strategies to encourage the involvement of practicing professionals with professional education faculty to further develop and refine the professional knowledge bases.
- (38) Professional education faculty are regularly involved with the professional world of practice in preschool, elementary, and, or secondary schools. (pp. 42-43)

[NOTE: Since the faculty in professional education prepare students to assume roles in human service organizations other than schools, these two Standards are also applicable to follow-up of graduates who work in such settings.]

The individual learned societies represent organizations of individual professionals with interests in specific curriculum content or subject areas (e.g., special education, mathematics, social studies, school psychology) and groups of professionals in organizations with a stake in different levels of schooling (e.g., preschool, elementary, middle, and secondary). The learned societies develop a wide-range of criteria that must be addressed in the individual folios completed by the faculty representing each of the programs of study in a unit. In special education, the learned society is the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, located in Reston, Virginia).

Since the mid-1960s, details about the work status of graduates of college and university special education programs have been required by the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (and the predecessor Bureau of Education for the Handicapped). Colleges and universities who are awarded fiscal support for personnel preparation projects must include plans for collecting follow-up data in their proposals and in their annual reports to the federal government.

CEC has assumed, in part, the original and continuing federal leadership position, and, thus, has developed criteria for NCATE on the follow-up of basic and advanced college and university special education program graduates. The CEC criteria (1988) include the following undergraduate and graduate requirements:

a) **Section I: Overview and Scope Programs in Special Education (Undergraduate)**

(8) Procedures for continuing interaction with consumers.

b) **Guidelines Programs in Special Education
Section I: Overview and Scope**

6. Procedures used by the special education program for continuing interaction with consumers (graduates, school systems, teachers, other organizations as appropriate).

c) **D. Student Involvement in Planning**

Standard 2.5. The institution makes provisions for representative student participation in the decision-making phases related to the design, approval, evaluation, and modification of its teacher education programs.

1. Describe how students are involved in decision-making with respect to the design, approval, evaluation, and modification of curriculum in each of the areas of emphasis. (pp. 6-7, 19)

For graduate programs in special education, the CEC criteria cover just one aspect of the program. That is:

a) **D. Student Involvement**

Standard G-2.5. The institution makes provisions for representative student participation in the decision-making phases related to the design, approval, evaluation, and modification of its advanced programs.

1. Describe how students are involved in decision making with respect to the design, approval, evaluation and modification of curriculum for each area of emphasis. (p. 31)

The standards on student involvement are quite general. Therefore, these standards and other standards often require a rationale to bring about consistency and coherence between the learned society's idiosyncratic needs and the broader NCATE requirements. Thus, in the guidelines of most of the learned societies, an association between these two complementary interests is made to assist those engaged in the review process to more effectively respond to requests for information. A section of the Standards and Guidelines published by CEC (1988) describes the integrated nature of the NCATE and CEC criteria:

a) **The CEC and NCATE Curriculum Standards Correlated Student Involvement In Planning**

A. **The CEC Standard:**

2.5 Student Participation in Program Evaluation and Development - The institution makes provisions for representative student participation in the decision making phases related to the design and modification of its teacher education programs.

B. **Applicable NCATE Standards and Criteria for Compliance:**

Standard

The professional education unit maintains relationships with graduates from its professional education program(s). This relationship includes assistance to graduates who are first year teachers and/or who are beginning other professional roles in the unit's geographical area.

Criteria for Compliance

1. The unit keeps abreast of emerging evaluation techniques and engages in regular and systematic evaluation to determine the success and quality of graduates in the professional roles for which they were prepared.
2. Follow-up studies of graduates are used by the unit to assess the relevance of professional education program objectives and to modify and improve the program(s) appropriately.

3. The institution has developed arrangements with school districts (and other human service agencies, present author addition) in the area to provide professional development services to its graduates as an extension of the professional education program(s). The provision of services to beginning teachers and other graduates in new professional education roles could be developed cooperatively with other colleges and/or universities. (p. 69)

Consequences for the Criteria of Practice

The NCATE-sponsored concern for the follow-up of graduates, along with the concerns of the learned societies, has resulted in a variety of formal and informal efforts to improve and enhance the quality of a unit's basic and advanced professional education programs. The methods typically used to collect follow-up data to make those changes is through interviews of graduates, supervisors of those graduates, school and human services administrators who are the employers of those graduates, and other relevant professionals in the community. Questions posed usually focus on:

Adequacy of Program of Study

- 1) Faculty-student interactions
- 2) General (Liberal Arts) coursework
- 3) Professional education coursework
- 4) Specialty area coursework
- 5) Practicum/Internship/Student Teaching

Professional Development

- 1) Schools as community/Culture of schools
- 2) Teacher-Administrator relationships
- 3) Classroom management
- 4) Behavior modification techniques
- 5) Child abuse and neglect
- 6) Drug abuse
- 7) Policy, law, and regulations
- 8) Relationships with parents and families
- 9) Integration of special education students
- 10) Record keeping
- 11) Advanced teaching methods and strategies
- 12) Working with community agencies
- 13) Curriculum development

Continuing Institutional Support

- 1) Mentoring/Induction programs
- 2) Professional development workshops
- 3) Graduate training

Reactions to Graduates

- 1) Relevance of training
- 2) Adequacy of knowledge
- 3) Professionalism
- 4) Adequacy of skills
- 5) Performance of graduates
- 6) Comparison to graduates from other places

Continuing Relationship to Institution, School, Community

- 1) Consultation with schools
- 2) Involvement in professional development opportunities
- 3) Planning professional preparation curriculum with the colleges/universities
- 4) Joint research projects
- 5) Institution-School-Community relationships

The State of the Knowledge Base in Graduate Follow-up

The information base on the follow-up of graduates of professional education programs is scant, especially in relation to the surveys and interviews conducted by colleges and universities that receive federal support and/or have received NCATE accreditation. As of May 1, 1990, only two university reports are in the ERIC Library, also housed at CEC. Telephone conversations with professional staff members at NCATE and the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education yielded no other reports of individual college or university follow-up efforts.

Raw data and detailed graduate follow-up program descriptions probably can be found in two places. First, the largest repository of information on the follow-up of graduates in college and university special education programs would seem to be the proposal applications and annual reports of personnel preparation projects on file at the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. Second, the program folios and the reports of preconditions of the colleges and universities which have gone through, or now are preparing to participate in the newly revised NCATE (1987) review process, should contain very specific data and other information on graduate follow-up.

A review of article titles published during the past 10 years (1979-1990) in Exceptional Children (Volumes 47-56), Teaching Exceptional Children (Volumes 12-21), and the Journal of Special Education (Volumes 13-22) found just one article on this topic (Stile, S.W. et. al., 1986). However, two articles recently have been published in Rural Special Education Quarterly offering reflections about the attitudes of graduates of special education professional preparation programs toward those programs (Ludlow, et. al., 1990; Morgan & Whorton, 1988).

Other Developments

With the inception of the educational reform movement that began in the 1980s, interest in the status of graduates from professional preparation programs in education has increased. Generally, this focus has been on the design and implementation of mentoring and induction processes (Editors, 1988), as well as certain aspects of school-based management practices to assist recent graduates in adjusting to the demands of their new professional roles and to the school culture and community (Askins & Schwisow, 1989).

Suggestions of ways in which colleges and universities might follow-up on their recent graduates can be found in recent works on: empowering of teachers and school leaders (Editors, 1990; Bolin, 1989; Ellsworth, 1989), continuing self-analyses of teaching as a career choice (Murnane et. al., 1989), reforms of teacher training (Bull & Hyle, 1990; Sikula & Roth, 1984), and career ladders and other progressive accountability approaches (Darling-Hammond, 1989; Moore, 1984).

If these new efforts are implemented to any extent in the near future, faculty in college and university professional education programs will be able to: 1) receive reports about the status of their recent graduates from local school systems who have a stake in improving the quality of those students professional preparation; 2) become involved in a working partnership with the schools and would have consistent access to the status of many of their recent graduates; and, 3) and conduct joint research projects with local school systems on these emerging trends.

Summary

The follow-up of graduates of professional preparation programs in special education across the nation began during the mid-1960s as a result of a need to know about the status of professionals who just completed their training in programs receiving federal support from the Office of Special Education Programs Division of Personnel Preparation.

College and university faculty teaching in professional preparation programs in education engage in follow-up of their students usually because of an institutional need for accreditation from a national organization. It is not difficult to understand, then, that the follow-up of graduates may occur in an inconsistent manner. The information base on the follow-up of graduates of professional education programs is sparse. The need for more models of consistent and effective follow-up procedures of graduates seems apparent.

The need for follow-up to determine the degree of success of graduates in their educational work settings and the impact of their training programs is obvious. However, these efforts must be undertaken with specific purposes in mind and with an obligation on the part of a college or university to provide technical assistance to graduates on a regular and systematic basis.

For example, a new two part effort is being implemented by the faculty of Gallaudet University's Departments of Administration and Supervision and Education. Graduates of the programs offered by these departmental faculty are surveyed annually for a five year period to determine their opinions on the usefulness of their training and the kinds of technical assistance the faculty can provide to them at the time of the survey and during the following few years. Technical assistance and support is provided through regular telephone and electronic mail (email) consultations on issues in which graduates specify they need support. Some of these issues include program budgeting and evaluation, staff supervision, and relationships with outside agencies and organizations. A special workshop on leadership and management in human services for graduates is being planned with the assistance and leadership of at least one of the graduates surveyed.

The issue of interinstitutional collaboration between the college or university and schools or human service agencies is important to assuring a continuing "institutional memory" (Whelan, 1990 personal communication) of the graduate. The institutional memory can be instilled through a variety of follow-up activities. One particularly popular idea at present is the use of mentors whereby a faculty member and a graduate engage in a one or two year support relationship that is designed to assist the graduate in adjusting to a new work environment and new professional responsibilities. An additional benefit is the greater comfort the graduate has in assuming a new professional role; that is to say, the recent graduate does not feel abandoned or alone. One success factor in developing follow-up efforts with graduates of professional preparation programs in education is the use of faculty who are invested in assuring satisfying results.

Another success factor is the sharing of information among faculty and graduates to assure: 1) the follow-up effort addresses the needs of graduates; and, 2) faculty is continuously trained to assure their understanding of the public school situation and emerging trends in education.

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